

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 676

By McManus

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor the survivors of the HMT *Rohna* for valorous service during World War II and for their commitment to honor the memory of their fallen comrades.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom; the American troops aboard the HMT *Rohna*, having performed above and beyond the call of duty, should be specially honored by this legislative body; and

WHEREAS, on November 26, 1943, during World War II, the British troopship, the HMT *Rohna*, was attacked from the air and destroyed in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Algeria; and

WHEREAS, the ship was part of a convoy travelling east from Oran to the Far East via the Suez Canal; the sinking of the HMT *Rohna* marked the first successful "hit" of a merchant vessel at sea carrying U.S. troops by a German remote-controlled, rocket-boosted bomb, thus giving birth to the "Missile Age"; and

WHEREAS, the attack resulted in the greatest loss of troops, 1,015, at sea in American history; combined with the loss of the ship's crew, officers, and Red Cross workers, more lives were lost than on the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor; and

WHEREAS, the hit was so devastating that the federal government placed a veil of secrecy upon the events of that day, and that secrecy continued for decades. Only recently were documents released under the Freedom of Information Act; thus, most families of the casualties still do not know the fate of their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, over fifty years later, a group of survivors, next-of-kin, and rescuers, informally came together for the sole purpose of enabling the creation and dedication of a *Rohna* Memorial; and

WHEREAS, on Memorial Day in 1996, a monument was dedicated at Fort Mitchell National Cemetery in Seales, Alabama, to honor the memory of the 1,015 men who lost their lives in the sinking of the HMT *Rohna*; and

WHEREAS, four years later, the Rohna Survivors Memorial Association became more formally organized, and many of those involved in the earlier Memorial Dedication project worked diligently toward the formation of this new organization; and

WHEREAS, articles and by-laws were drawn up and the association defined its goals, which are: to continue in the search for survivors as-yet-undiscovered and the families of those who perished, so as to provide them with information they never had about the fate of their loved ones; to bring the Rohna story before the public, to honor the men who lost their lives in this incident and those on the rescue vessels who acted selflessly in their rescue efforts; and to further, by reunions and other communications, the closeness among the membership; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that this General Assembly should honor the memory and the lives of the U.S. troops who were aboard the HMT *Rohna* that fateful day in 1943; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the gallant American troops who were aboard the HMT *Rohna* that tragic day in November of 1943; we recognize their valorous service to a grateful nation, salute their conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity during World War II, and laud the ship's heroic survivors for their stalwart commitment to honor the memory of their fallen comrades.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.